

# Home & School

## CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

MJ Fletcher Elementary  
Ms. Maria DeJoy, Principal

### SHORT NOTES

#### Excellent attendance

Being in school every day means your child won't miss out on learning. Try to schedule appointments and family trips outside of school hours. If he asks to stay home "just because," remind him of what he'll miss, such as his reading group or PE class. Explain that he can be absent only if he's sick or if there's a family emergency.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Children who regularly eat meals with their families tend to do better in school and avoid risky behavior. Eating dinner together is great, but other meals count, too. If you work at night, maybe you could make time for a family breakfast. Or on a weekend, try a picnic lunch.

#### Celebrate progress

Suggest that your youngster create a fun reminder of all the things she has accomplished. Let her cover a box with construction paper and label it "I did it!" Then, she can write each success ("I learned to add fractions") on a slip of paper and put it in the box. If she's feeling discouraged, have her read the slips.

#### Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up!"  
Mark Twain

### JUST FOR FUN

**Q:** Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

**A:** Of course. The Empire State Building can't jump!



## Conversations about school

When you think of parent involvement, do you picture moms and dads volunteering in classrooms? That's one way to help—but research shows that supporting your child's education at home is even more important. Here are conversation starters that will help you stay involved.

#### "Let's see what you brought home."

Look at completed work to find out what your youngster is learning and how well she's doing. You could comment on her math work or social studies project, for instance. ("You know a lot about our state's history!") Also, respond to notes from her teacher, and sign her weekly folder or daily planner if required.

#### "Show me what you have for homework."

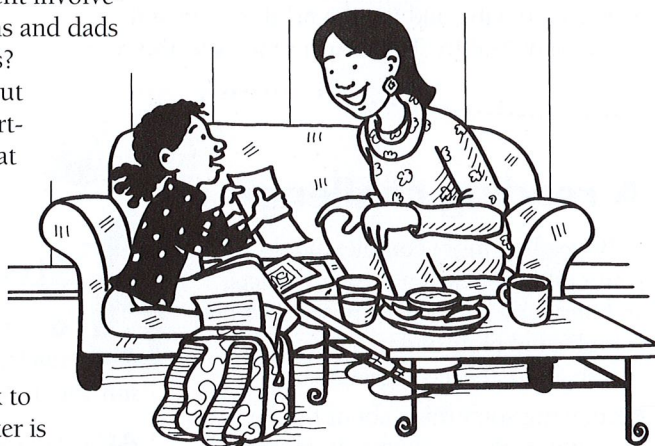
It's your child's job to do her homework, but you play a role, too. Make sure she knows what she's supposed to do by having her explain the assignments to you. After she finishes her homework, glance over the work to see that it's complete.

#### "Describe a book you enjoyed today."

This gives you an idea of what your youngster prefers to read. Then, build a daily reading habit by asking what she'd like to read tonight. Encourage her reading and listening skills by reading aloud to her and letting her read to you.

#### "Tell me what you learned that you'd like to know more about."

Use her interests as jumping-off points for activities to share. If she likes geometry, you might hunt for



shapes together. If she's fascinated by how animals adapt to winter, take her to the library to research the subject or to the zoo to see live animals.♥

### After-school questions

Asking "How was school today?" might not get you far. Instead, ask questions like these for a better picture of your youngster's day:

- "What's the coolest thing that happened today?"
- "Pretend you're the teacher. How would you describe the day?"
- "What made you laugh?"
- "What was the most creative thing you did?"
- "How were you kind or helpful today? How was someone kind or helpful to you?" ♥

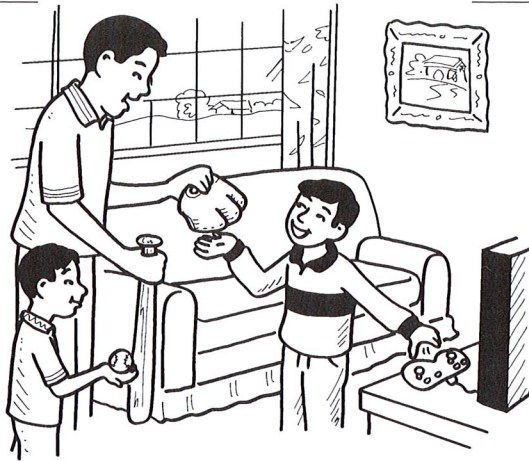




# What does respect look like?

Your youngster's daily dealings with adults and kids alike will be more pleasant if he speaks and acts respectfully. Try these tips for helping him learn about respect.

**Respectful replies.** Think about something that you and your youngster disagree on (say, whether his video game time should be limited). Model having a respectful discussion about it. You might say that his brain and body are growing and that he needs to run and play to stay healthy. Then, suggest a respectful response, such



as, "I want to be healthy, but I love video games." Have him brainstorm other situations where people have different opinions but still speak to each other with respect.

**Everyday acts.** When you mow the lawn or clean up after your dog, you can teach your child about respect for neighbors. Explain that keeping your neighborhood clean and neat makes it nice for everyone. Ask him to think of other respectful things neighbors should do. If you share an apartment laundry room, he might say that you respect neighbors' time by removing your clothes when they're done so others get to use the washers and dryers.♥

## A reading challenge

By reading more complex books, your child can learn new words, facts, and ideas. He'll also be exposed to more complicated plots and will grow as a reader. Share these suggestions:

- Knowing something about the topic or setting makes a tougher book easier to comprehend. If your youngster is reading a novel set in China, he could talk to someone who has been there or look up the country online (try a children's site like *kids.nationalgeographic.com*).

- Encourage your child to look at a simpler book on the same subject. A picture-book biography about Harriet Tubman may help your youngster better understand a textbook chapter on the civil rights movement, for instance.

- Suggest that your child read complicated material with pencil and paper in hand. He can jot down questions, words to look up, or facts he wants to learn more about.♥



## Strong study habits

**Q:** My third grader has to spend more time studying this year. How can I make sure she studies effectively?

**A:** Set your daughter up for success by helping her find a distraction-free study spot. Also, have her come up with a study routine. For instance, she could reserve time each evening to review her textbook and notes in the days leading up to a test.

Also, many students find it helpful to jot down a purpose each time they study. Your child might write: "I will learn the definitions of all the boldfaced words in chapter 7, section 1."

Finally, encourage her to experiment with study strategies to find what works best. She could close her eyes and imagine how a word is spelled or draw a grid with 9 squares to solve  $3 \times 3$ . Or she might find it helpful to spell or recite math facts aloud in rhythm or to a familiar tune.♥



## PARENT TO PARENT

### Talking to kids about money

My children were always asking to buy things like dress-up shoes or new games. They didn't seem to understand that these items weren't in our budget.

I wanted them to learn about how we spend our money—and that it is limited. So I got a spiral notebook and labeled it "Family Spending Journal." I explained that for two weeks, everyone would keep a record of what they spent money on. I listed items like my

subway fare, the electric bill, and food at the grocery store. The children wrote down expenses such as school lunch, soccer cleats, and field trip fees.

After a few days, they were surprised by how many things we needed money for. Our kids had no idea, for example, that we paid for taxes on our income, several types of insurance, and membership in our homeowners' association. Sometimes they still ask to buy too many things at the store, but when I say no, at least they understand why.♥



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# Early Years

H1501

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START



## KID BITS

### Safety first

Help your child stay safe at school with these clothing tips. Make sure she wears shoes that fit properly and either tie or have Velcro. They're less likely to cause accidents than floppy shoes like sandals or clogs. Also, avoid baggy clothes and cords or strings on clothing that can get caught in playground equipment.

### Sizing things up

Take a walk around your neighborhood with your little one, and use objects you see to encourage him to compare sizes. Ask questions like "Is that mailbox *taller* or *shorter* than you?" or "Is the white rock *bigger* or *smaller* than the gray one?"

### Helping hands

Trace around your child's hands on paper, and ask her to name different ways she is helpful. Maybe she takes care of your dog by feeding him and helps you by dusting. Together, write each example on a separate finger. Then, hang up her "helping hands" to remind her how helpful she can be.

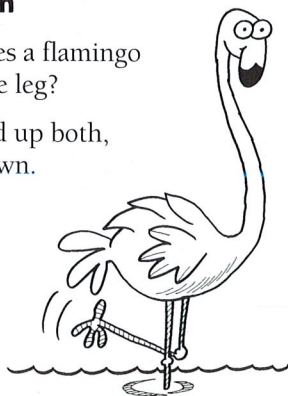
### Worth quoting

"Wonder. Go on and wonder."  
William Faulkner

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

**A:** If he held up both, he'd fall down.



MJ Fletcher Elementary  
Ms. Maria DeJoy, Principal

## Keys to self-control

It can be a tall order for little ones to handle big emotions like anger, frustration, and disappointment. Work on increasing your child's self-control with these strategies to help him think before he acts.

### Talk it out

Give your youngster words to use when he is upset. For example, if you can't find your glasses, you might say, "I feel so *frustrated*! Where did I last have them?" Then, when he's aggravated (say, he misplaced his favorite book), encourage him to use similar words. ("I feel *upset* because I want my book. I was looking at it in the living room—maybe it's there.") He'll learn to talk through his problems and be less likely to cry or whine.

### Think ahead

Prepare for situations where self-control comes in handy. You could say, "We're going to your cousin's house. Let's think about what you can do if she's playing with a toy you want." He may



ask to join her, or he could play with another toy until she's finished. Having a plan can help your child avoid grabbing the toy or yelling at his cousin.

### Calm down

When your youngster begins to get upset, suggest ways to keep his cool. For instance, he might take a deep breath, count to five, or draw a picture of how he is feeling. The distraction may be enough to settle him down. And once he's used to these techniques, he'll be able to do them without a reminder from you. ♥

## Family playtime

Has the grown-up world left you too tired to play? Consider these ideas that will let you connect with your youngster—and unwind after a long day:

- Show her what you liked to play when you were her age. You could teach her a card game, a jump rope rhyme, or a magic trick, for instance. Next, ask her to teach you a game or an activity she enjoys.
- Step into a role. You might each pretend to be someone else (a cashier and a customer, a bird and a squirrel) while carrying on a conversation. Encourage your child to think about what her character would sound like and what she would say.
- At bedtime, shine a flashlight on the walls, ceiling, and floor. Have your youngster "chase" your beam with her own flashlight. Then, trade roles. ♥

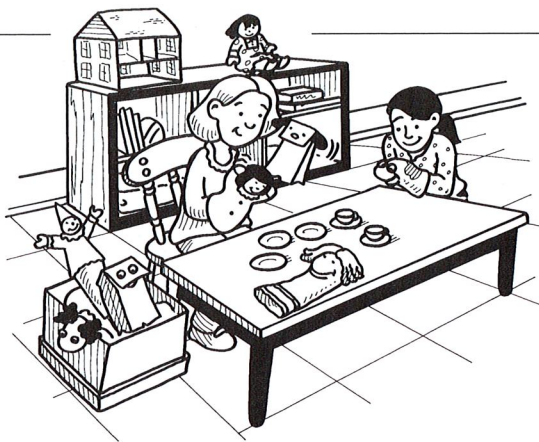




## Let me think...

When your youngster is faced with a challenge, it's fun for her to come up with more than one solution or possibility. Stretch her thinking with these activities.

**Puppet problem-solving.** Offer a pretend dilemma for puppets, and help your child act out the solution. You could make your puppet say, "Oh, no! I have too many dishes to carry! How can I get them to the party?" (Put them in a bag, ask a friend to take some.)



**Answers and questions.** Tell your youngster, "The answer is a blanket. What is the question?" Take turns coming up with as many questions as possible. ("What keeps you warm at night?" "What do we sit on at a picnic?") When you run out of ideas, let her think of a new answer to make up questions for.

**What doesn't belong?** Look around the room, and name any four objects (T-shirt, book, hat, lipstick). Then, have your child decide which doesn't belong and explain why. For instance, she could say that the book is the only one you can't wear. *Variation:* Name three objects, and tell her to choose a fourth and explain how it's related to the three you picked.♥

## "I love my school"

Encourage your child to have a positive attitude toward school with these tips:

- Let him hear you say good things about his teacher and his school. *Example:* "Mrs. Jackson always has such fun projects for your class to do."



- Attend special school events together. Going to family nights and on field trips helps your child see school as an important part of your family's life.

- Volunteer when you can. You might help with school carnivals, book fairs, and fund-raisers if you have time. If your schedule is tight, look for quick ways to show support like saving magazines for class projects or sending in fruit for a snack.♥

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### PARENT TO PARENT

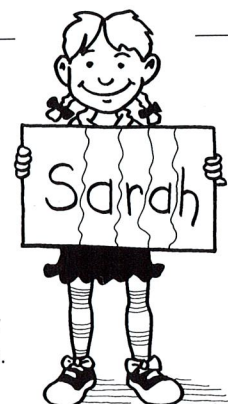
## That's my name!

My daughter has learned to read and write her first word: "Sarah." When she started school this year, the teacher sent home a list of ideas to help her recognize her name—and the suggestions worked!

For example, I wrote her name in pencil and let her use a different-colored marker to trace each letter as she said it out loud: "S-a-r-a-h." We also made a name puzzle. She printed her name on cardboard and drew squiggly lines between the letters. I cut them apart, and she put the puzzle back together.

Her favorite activity is listening to stories about characters named Sarah. At the library, we checked out *Sarah's Story* by Bill Harley and *Sarah's Room* by Doris Orgel. She loves pointing to her name as I read.

Now Sarah is learning to read other names in our family. She made puzzles for her sisters, and she wants to find library books with their names, too.♥



## Getting enough sleep

**Q:** My son has a hard time falling asleep at night. How can I make it easier for him?

**A:** Getting enough sleep—10–13 hours a night—will help your child grow, stay healthy, and do well in school.

First, have him stick to a nightly bedtime routine.

Your son might take a bath, brush his teeth, and listen to a story, for instance. Repeating the routine each night helps him recognize

it's time for sleep. Also, research shows that watching TV or playing video games close to bedtime can get kids wound up and keep them from sleeping. If he uses electronics, have him turn them off at least an hour before bedtime.

Finally, encourage the rest of the family

to read or do other quiet activities after he says good night. Your youngster may have an easier time going to bed—and staying there—if he doesn't feel like he's missing out on the fun.♥





# Reading Connection

Tips for Reading Success

Beginning Edition

MJ Fletcher Elementary  
Ms. Maria DeJoy, Principal

## Book Picks

### Read-aloud favorites

#### ■ **Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia** (Jeanette Winter)

What if the library came to your neighborhood on the back of a donkey?

This is the true story of a Colombian school-teacher's traveling library that brought books to children in remote villages. (Also available in Spanish.)



#### ■ **Dragons Love Tacos** (Adam Rubin)

When a little boy discovers that dragons like to eat tacos, he decides to host a taco party for them. But if a fire-breathing dragon accidentally gets a bite of spicy salsa, look out! A silly story about a dragon party that turns into a disaster.

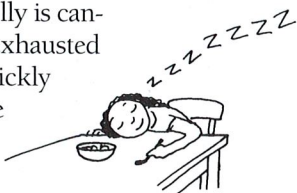


#### ■ **Just a Second** (Steve Jenkins)

In just a single second, a bumblebee flaps its wings 100 times and the earth travels 18½ miles. This nonfiction book will help your child think about time in fascinating ways. She'll also discover different methods of measuring time.

#### ■ **Bedtime Is Canceled** (Cece Meng)

Maggie and her brother write their parents an official-looking note: "Bedtime is canceled." Somehow, the note blows out the window, lands in a newspaper office, and ends up in a headline. Soon, bedtime really is canceled, and exhausted children quickly discover the importance of sleep.

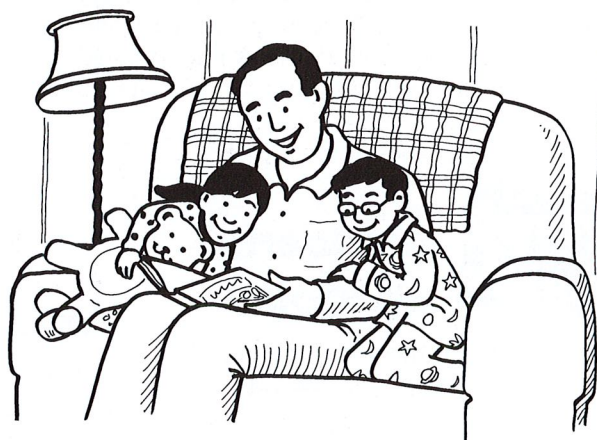


## Time for a story

Want to spend time with your youngster, build her reading skills, and help her learn to love books? You can do all three when you read aloud. Here are suggestions.

### Read regularly

Try to read to your child every day. You might aim for 10–15 minutes of bedtime reading for a peaceful end to the day. Bring along a book, and read to her during a sibling's sports practice. Or curl up together with a book when you get home from work.



### Take turns choosing books

Your youngster may want to hear old favorites again and again. That's fine! When it's your turn to pick, add new titles and variety, such as nonfiction or poetry.

### Let her participate

Ask your child to turn the pages while you read. Also, she can finish sentences that rhyme or fill in words she knows. Go slowly so she has time to understand

the story and look at the illustrations. She'll enjoy read-aloud time more if she plays an active role.

### Be playful

You can use different voices for different characters (a high, squeaky voice for a mouse or a deep, booming voice for a horse). Or substitute your youngster's name for the main character's name, and use family members' names for others.

*Note:* You don't have to be an expert reader—your child will love it when you read aloud because it's you.♥

## Writing that makes sense

As your child first learns to write, his stories may not always make sense to others. Help his writing flow logically with these two ideas.

1. Even if your youngster isn't writing sentences yet, he can tell you stories. As he describes the new class pet or something funny that happened at lunch, you can jot down his tale. He'll practice relating events in a logical order, and that can help when he writes.

2. Let your child read his stories to you. Ask questions to encourage him to add information ("What did you do with your friends at recess?") or to clear up a confusing part ("Who said, 'Let's go home'—you or your brother?").♥





# Spot the details

What is an archaeologist? What do bears eat? Nonfiction books have the answers—and if your child reads carefully, he will find them. The following suggestions can help him read for details and boost his comprehension.

**Read around the text.** The pages of many nonfiction books are covered with “extras” that stories don’t have (headings, photo captions, an index, a glossary). Point out these features. Then, ask your youngster what questions he has about the topic that the book might answer. Say he’s reading *Archaeologists Dig for Clues* by Kate Duke. He might



child to look for ways that real bears are different from the fictional ones. For example, he might say that real bears eat things like grass, berries, fish, and insects, while the three bears eat porridge.♥

think, “What tools do archaeologists use?” or “What are fossils?” Help him read the book, and see how many answers he can find.

## Pair fiction with nonfiction.

Together, read a story like *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (James Marshall) followed by a nonfiction book such as *Bears* (Deborah Hodge). As you read the second book, encourage your



## Wonderful wordplay

Use these activities to build your child’s phonemic awareness—her ability to hear sounds in words:

- Choose a three-letter word, such as *cap*. Have your youngster substitute different beginning sounds from the alphabet to make new words (*lap*, *map*, *nap*, *rap*, *sap*, *tap*, *zap*). How many can she think of?



- Pick a long word, and tell her to clap once as she says each syllable. For *mozzarella*, she would clap four times: *moz-za-rel-la*.

- Ask your child to say a word without the first sound. Example: “Can you say *sit* without the s?” (Answer: *It*)

- Think of a word, and give your youngster a “sound” clue to figure it out. For instance, “I’m thinking of a word for something that you chew but don’t swallow. The word has an *uh* sound in the middle.” (Answer: *Gum*)♥

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## Vocabulary boosters

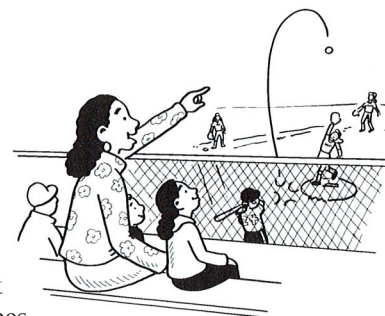
A large vocabulary can turn your child into a better reader and writer. Try these everyday ways to help her learn new words.

### Keep your ears open

When you and your youngster go places, point out words that people use. Maybe a waiter describes an *entree* or the dentist talks about *molars*. Encourage your child to figure out what the words mean by the way they’re used.

### Go beyond nouns

Help your youngster add adjectives and verbs to her vocabulary. Sports and games offer opportunities to use action words. Let your child hear you comment on the softball that *soars* or the runner who *sprints*. When she sends thank you notes or greeting cards, suggest descriptive words (a *polka-dotted* shirt, a *fantastic* birthday).♥



## Parent to Parent

## A journal-writing tradition

My grandson Keith saw me writing in my journal and asked what I was doing. I explained that my grandfather got me started writing in a journal when I was a little boy. Keith said he wanted to start a journal, too, so I gave him a notebook.

He asked me what he should write about. I told him that I use my journal mostly to store

memories, but he can do whatever he wants—even draw pictures. He decided to sketch the two of us writing together in our journals, and he had me help him write a sentence about his picture.

Keith has stuck with his journal for a couple of weeks already. Now when he comes to my house, he can’t wait to share what he has written and drawn.♥





# Math+Science Connection

Intermediate Edition

Building Understanding and Excitement for Children

MJ Fletcher Elementary  
Ms. Maria DeJoy, Principal

## INFO BITS



### Open-door angles

Doors in your house are the perfect place for hands-on practice with angles. Take turns opening or closing a door and asking, "Acute, right, or obtuse?" Partially open a door, and it's an acute angle. Open it straight out, and it's a right angle. Open it wider, and it's obtuse.

### Habitat for rent

Help your child think about what animals need to survive (shelter, food, water). Then, have her choose an animal (monkey) and write a classified ad for a home that will meet its needs. *Example:* "Tall tree in a tropical rain forest. Large river nearby for drinking. Plenty of leaves, fruit, and insects to eat."

### Book picks

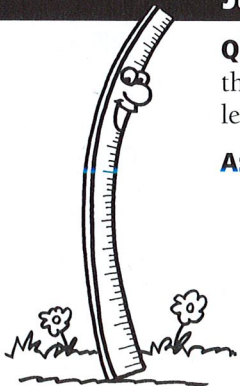
■ *The Man Who Counted: A Collection of Mathematical Adventures* (Malba Tahan) combines an adventure story with interesting math puzzles.

■ Learning about the solar system is fun when planets tell the story themselves. Dan Green's *Astronomy: Out of This World!* contains fascinating facts and details along with cartoon illustrations your youngster is sure to love.

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has three feet but no legs or arms?

**A:** A yard.



## Fractions of fun

Understanding fractions is much easier when your child can visualize them. Here are ideas to help her see—and use—fractions.

### Keep a diary

Show your youngster that fractions are a part of everyday life. For a week, have her record and illustrate each one she notices. For instance, she might write, "We had a half day of school today," or "Mom asked for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pounds of turkey at the store." How many examples can she find and draw?

### Play a game

Have each player cut a sheet of construction paper into six horizontal strips. She should leave the first one whole and then cut the second one in half (fold it, and cut along the fold), and the others into thirds, fourths, sixths, and eighths. With bits of masking tape, label a die:  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{6}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ , and "wild." To play, roll the die,



and lay the matching piece of paper on your whole strip (for "wild," choose any piece). The goal is to be the first one to fill your strip without overlapping any pieces (*example:*  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{4} = 1$  whole strip).

### Put in order

Together, make a set of fraction cards, with one fraction per index card ( $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $1$ ,  $1\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $1\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $2$ ). Shuffle the cards, and see how quickly your child can put them in order. Then, while she closes her eyes, lay the cards in order but leave out a few. Give her the missing cards, and have her put them where they go. 📦

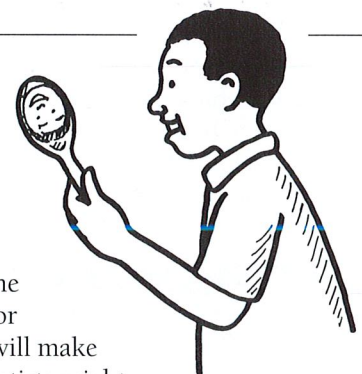
### Look at me!

Help your youngster learn about the science of optics with this mealtime activity.

Have him look at himself in a clean spoon. What happens if he looks in the bowl of the spoon? (He's upside down.) What happens on the other side? (He's right side up.)

Next, have him bring his finger toward the spoon and watch what happens on each side. The bowl (the *concave* side) will magnify his finger, or make it look larger. The back (the *convex* side) will make his finger look smaller. Ask your child how scientists might use this information to make eyeglasses, cameras, or telescopes.

**Tip:** He can remember which side is which by thinking of concave as "caves in." 📦





# Multiply and divide

Learning to multiply and divide can be more about *thinking* than memorizing. Strategies like these will help your youngster practice.

**Make it fun.** If your child collects toy animals, you might ask, “How many legs do 4 horses have?” He can *skip count* the legs by 4s (4, 8, 12, 16) to see that  $4 \times 4 = 16$ . Or if he has friends over and wants to divide 17 pretzels equally among 3 people, he can “deal them out.” He’ll see that each person gets 5, and there are 2 left over. ( $17 \div 3 = 5$ , remainder 2)



**Use what you know.** Encourage your youngster to look for clues to help him solve problems. For  $8 \times 7$ , he could consider other math facts he knows. “I know 4 groups of  $7 = 28$ . I need 8 groups, so I can double that answer. If  $28 + 28 = 56$ , then  $8 \times 7 = 56$ .” For  $30 \div 5$ , he might say, “I know  $10 \div 5 = 2$ . There are three 10s in 30, and  $3 \times 2 = 6$ . So  $30 \div 5$  must be 6.”



## Q & A Talk up math

**Q:** I've never felt comfortable with math. How should I talk to my child about what he's learning in math class?

**A:** Try to show enthusiasm for what your youngster is doing in math. You might ask him each day at dinner or homework time what he studied in math that day. Let him explain the concepts he's working on, and follow up with questions. For instance, if he's learning about decimals, you could ask how decimal points are used in money (they separate the parts of a dollar from the whole dollar).

Then, when your child finishes his homework, have him show you how he solved a few problems. As he explains his methods to you, he'll be reinforcing his own skills. And he'll be proud to be teaching you something!



## MATH CORNER

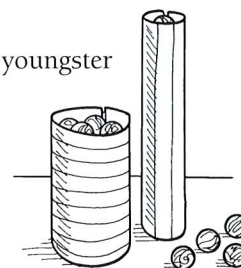
### Measuring volume

Which popcorn container does your youngster want at the movies? Have her do this activity to find out!

Ask her to roll two index cards into cylinders—one vertically and one horizontally—so the edges just touch, and tape them closed. One cylinder will be tall and skinny, and the other one short and wide.

Then, have her predict how many (same-size) marbles each tube could hold. Will the totals be the same? To test her prediction, let her fill each tube with marbles and count. How can she explain the result?

Your child may be surprised to find the shorter, wider cylinder holds more. That's because the radius of a cylinder has a greater effect on its *volume*—the amount of space inside a 3-D object—than its height does. So when she's ordering popcorn, she might prefer the shorter, wider cylinder to the taller, skinnier one!



## SCIENCE LAB

### Where did the green go?

This experiment uncovers a surprising fact: When leaves change color in the fall, it's really the green going away and the colors that were there all along coming out.

**You'll need:** green leaves, small jar, rubbing alcohol, wooden spoon, foil, small bowl, water, coffee filter, scissors

**Here's how:** Have your child tear the leaves into the jar, cover with alcohol, and mash with the spoon. Seal with foil, and place the jar in a bowl filled

with hot water. After 30 minutes, she should cut a strip from the coffee filter, remove the foil, and dangle the filter into the alcohol. Let it sit for an hour.

**What happens?** Lines of different colors will travel up the filter.

**Why?** Green leaf color comes from the chemical *chlorophyll*, which helps make food for trees in spring and summer. In fall, chlorophyll is no longer produced, so the hidden colors (yellow, orange, red) can be seen.



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote their children's math and science skills.

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